

**The Army of the South-West, and the First Campaign in Arkansas.
Chapter Fifth (pt. 2)**

Sam'l Prentis Curtis

ISSN 0003-4827

Material in the public domain. No restrictions on use.

Recommended Citation

The Annals of Iowa, 5(2) (Apr. 1867): 817-822

Hosted by [Iowa Research Online](#)

THE
ANNALS OF IOWA,
BY THE
STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

VOL. V. IOWA CITY, APRIL, 1867. No. II.

THE ARMY OF THE SOUTH-WEST, AND THE FIRST CAMPAIGN
IN ARKANSAS.

BY SAM'L PRENTIS CURTIS,

BREVET CAPTAIN AND AID-DE-CAMP TO MAJOR GENERAL CURTIS.

CHAPTER FIFTH.

(Continued from page 785.)

On my march to Leesville, I heard Major Poten's firing on the Bentonville road. Arriving at Leesville, the firing in front had ceased, whilst it commenced with new vehemence on the right at Elk Horn Tavern. At this moment Capt. McKenny, A. A. A. General, requested me, by order of Gen. Curtis, to send more reinforcements to the right, which I did by detaching five companies of the 25th Ills., and four pieces of Capt. Hoffman's battery, stationed in reserve at Leesville, to Elk Horn Tavern.

I then proceeded beyond the town to the battle-field, which I found in full possession of Cols. Davis and Osterhaus. As no enemy could be seen, except a small detachment on a distant hill, I requested Col. Davis to protect my left flank, by sending his skirmishers and one regiment of infantry forward through the woods whilst I proceeded with the 25th Ills. and four pieces of Welley's and Hoffman's batteries on the road to the north-east, which was already opened by the 44th Ills. and 15th Mo. After making one mile, and passing two hospitals of the enemy, I ordered Col. Osterhaus to follow me with the 12th Mo., the 36th Ills., and a section of artillery, which troops came up promptly, except the two pieces, 12-pounders, that remained with Col. Davis. We advanced slowly, and after making half a mile more, we reached an open field, where we took our position, and from which we could easily discern the camp fires of our friends and those of our enemies near Elk Horn Tavern.

I now sent immediately to Gen. Curtis, to apprise him of my position, and that I was ready to co-operate with him. Meanwhile night had fallen, and although the cannonading was renewed in the night, I did not believe that after a hard day's work the enemy would make a final and decisive attack.

In order, therefore, to disguise our position, from which I intended to advance in the morning, I kept the troops in the strictest silence, and did not allow the building of camp-fires, or any movement further than two or three hundred paces distant. So we remained until one o'clock in the morning, when I found it necessary to remove the troops, by a short and convenient road, into our common camp, to give them some food, sleep and a good fire, and to prepare them for battle.

To show the whole position of the 1st and 2d Divisions, on the evening of the 7th, allow me, General, to make the following statements:

Beginning on the left, Major Poten, with the 17th Mo., one company of the 3d Mo., two companies of the 15th Mo., two pieces of the Flying Artillery, and two companies of the Benton Hussars, were stationed on the Sugar Creek Bentonville road, three miles from the camp. The entrance of the road from this side, was guarded by two pieces of the 2d Ohio Battery, and six companies of the 2d Mo. Towards the north (Leesville) two companies of the 44th Ills., and twenty men of the 36th Ills. Cavalry remained on picket. On the right, near Elk Horn Tavern, were the following troops: Four companies of the 2d Mo., five companies of the 25th Ills., four pieces of the 2d Ohio Battery, and four pieces of Capt. Hoffman's Battery.

In the field, to the left of General Asboth and Col. Carr, under my immediate command, were the 12th Mo., the 15th Mo., the 25th, 36th and 44th Ills., two pieces of Capt. Welfley's, and two pieces of Capt. Hoffman's Battery.

The Fremont and Benton Hussars, and one section of Capt. Welfley's Battery, returned to camp with Col. Davis. The detachment of Major Conrads, consisting of six companies of infantry, detailed from the 3d, 15th and 17th Mo., and 36th Ills., and one piece of Capt. Welfley's Battery, was encamped a few miles west of Keetsville.

One piece of Capt. Welfley's Battery was spiked and taken by the enemy, but retaken and unspiked. Three pieces of Capt. Elbert's Flying Battery had been lost near Leesville, the wheels burnt by the enemy, and the guns left on the battle-field; another piece of this battery had broken down on the retreat from Bentonville to Sugar Creek, but the gun secured and brought into camp.

IV—BATTLE OF THE 8TH, NEAR ELK HORN TAVERN.—The different combats of the 7th, had fully developed the plans of the enemy. It was evident that his main forces were stationed near and at Elk Horn Tavern, and that he would make all efforts to break through our lines on the Fayetteville road, and thereby complete his apparent victory.

I therefore resolved to recall all troops and different detachments of the 1st and 2d Divisions, from wherever they were stationed (with the exception of four companies of the 2d Mo., and four pieces of artillery from the 2d Ohio Battery, sent to their original position on Sugar Creek) and to fall upon the right flank of the enemy, should he attack or advance from Elk Horn Tavern.

At daybreak of the 8th. the following troops were assembled near and around my headquarters, awaiting orders:

1st DIVISION—Col. Osterhaus.—2 companies 3d Mo. Vols., 12th and 17th Mo., 25th, 36th and 44th Illinois, Welfley's Battery, 5 pieces, Hoffman's Battery, 6 pieces, Capt. Jenks' squadron [cavalry attached] 36th Ills. [Infantry].

2d DIVISION—General Asboth.—2d Mo., six companies, 15th Mo., 2 pieces 2d Ohio Battery (Lieut. Chapman) Battalion (4 companies) 4th Mo. Cavalry (Fremont Hussars) 6 companies 5th Mo. Cavalry (Benton Hussars) 2 pieces Capt. Elbert's Flying Battery.

It was about 7 o'clock in the morning when the firing commenced on the Keetsville road, this side of Elk Horn Tavern. I was waiting for Col. Osterhaus and Lieut. Assmussen, of my staff, who had gone to reconnoitre the ground on which I intended to deploy, and to find the nearest road to that ground. The 44th Illinois had already been sent in advance to form our right, when the above named officers returned, and the movement began.

In less than half an hour, the troops were in their respective positions, the 1st Division forming the 1st line, the 2d Division, with all the cavalry, the reserve, 250 paces behind the first line.

To protect and cover the deployment of the left wing, I opened the fire on the right with a section of Capt. Hoffman's Battery. The enemy returned the fire promptly and with effect, but was soon outflanked by our position on the left, and exposed to a concentric and most destructive fire of our brave and almost never failing cannoniers.

After the first discharge, at a distance of 800 paces, I ordered Capt. Welfley and Lieut. Frank to advance about 250 yards to come into close range from the enemy's position, whilst I threw the 25th Ills. forward on the right, to cover the space between the Battery and the Keetsville road. Col. Schaffer, with the 2d Mo., was ordered to proceed to the extreme left, and, by forming against cavalry, to protect our left flank. This movement proved of great effect, and I now ordered the centre and the left to advance 200 paces, and brought the reserve forward on the position which our first line had occupied. I then took a Battery, commanded by Capt. Klaus, and belonging to Col. Davis' Division, nearer to my right, and reported to you that the road toward Elk Horn Tavern was open, and we were advancing.

About this time, when the battle had lasted one hour and a half, the enemy tried to extend his line farther to the right, in occupying the first hill of the long ridge, commanding the plain and the gradually rising ground where we stood. His infantry was already lodged upon the hill, seeking shelter behind the rocks and stones, whilst some pieces of artillery worked round to gain the plateau.

I immediately ordered the two howitzers of the reserve (the 2d Ohio, under Lieut. Ganesvoort) and the two pieces of Capt. Elbert's Flying Battery, to report to Col. Osterhaus on the left, to shell and batter the enemy on the hill. This was done in concert with Hoffman's Battery, and with terrible effect to the enemy, as the rocks and stones worked as hard as the shells and shot. The enemy's plan to enfilade our lines from the hills, was frustrated, and he was forced to beat a precipitate retreat with men and cannon. Encouraged by the

good and gallant behaviour of our troops, I resolved to draw the circle a little closer around the corner into which we had already pressed the enemy's masses, and ordered a second advance of all the batteries and battalions, changing the position of the right wing more to the left, and bringing the troops of the reserve, the 15th Mo., and the whole cavalry, behind our left.

Assisted by Klaus' Battery on the right, and co-operating with the troops of the 3d and 4th Divisions, who advanced with new spirit on the Keetsville road, the enemy was overwhelmed by the deadly power of our artillery, and after about one hour's work, the firing on his side began to slacken, and nearly totally ceased.

To profit this favorable moment, I ordered the 12th Mo., the 25th and 44th Ills., to throw forward a strong force of skirmishers, and take the woods in front, where the enemy had planted one of his batteries. At the same time, I ordered the 17th Mo. Vols., which had arrived during the battle from Bentonville road, to climb the hill on our left, and to press forward against the enemy's rear. The 36th Ills. was also ordered to assist this movement, and to hold communication between the 12th and 17th Mo., whilst Cols. Schaffer and Joliat, with the 2d and 15th Mo., followed slowly, and Col. Nemett, with his cavalry, guarded the rear.

The rattling of musketry, the volleys, the hurrahs, did prove very soon that our troops were well at work in the woods, and that they were gaining ground rapidly. It was the 12th Mo., under Major Wangelin, which, at this occasion, took Dallas' Artillery, and their flag followed close behind, and on the right by one part of the 3d Mo., the 44th and the 25th Ills., and on the left by the 36th Ills.

The 17th Mo., under Major Poten, had meanwhile arrived on the top of Pea Ridge, forming the extreme left of our line of battle.

The enemy was routed, and fled in terror and confusion in all directions.

It was a delightful moment, when we all met, after 12 o'clock, on the eminence, where the enemy held position with his batteries, a few minutes before, and when you let pass by the columns of your victorious army.

To pursue the enemy, I sent Capt. Von Kielmansegge, with one company of Fremont Hussars, forward; the 17th and 3d Mo. followed in double quick time, assisted by two pieces of Elbert's Flying Artillery. Other troops of the 1st Division, all under Col. Osterhaus, came up and continued their march towards Keetsville.

At the fork of the Benton and Keetsville roads, I detached the 44th Ills. (Col. Knobelsdorff) two pieces of artillery of the Flying Battery, and a squad of 30 men (Fremont Hussars) to proceed a short distance on the road to Bentonville, and to guard that road. Arrived at Keetsville with the greatest portion of my command, I found that one part of the enemy had turned to Roaring River and Berryville, while others had turned to the left.

I also received your order to return to Sugar Creek, which I did, and met the army on Sugar Creek at 4 o'clock in the evening of the 9th.

A list of the dead, wounded and missing of this command, has already been transmitted to you, and a special report, mentioning those officers and men of

my command, who deserve consideration for their conduct in action, together with the reports of the different commanders of regiments and corps, will follow to-day, as some of the reports have not come in yet.

I am, General, very respectfully your ob't serv't,

F. SIGEL,

Brig. Gen'l, Comd'g 1st and 2d Divisions.

TO BRIG. GEN'L S. R. CURTIS, COMD'G S. W. ARMY.

SIGEL'S SPECIAL REPORT.

HEAD QUARTERS 1ST AND 2D DIVISIONS,
CAMP HOFFMAN, MO., March 20th, 1862. }

GENERAL:—In accordance with Par. 743, Army Regulations, I take leave to transmit to you the names of the following officers, non-com. officers and privates, who have distinguished themselves under my immediate command and presence, in the different actions of the 6th, 7th and 8th of March.

On the 6th, retreat from Bentonville to Sugar Creek, Major Wangelin, comd'g the 12th Reg't Mo. Vols., the only infantry being present during the retreat from Bentonville, Major Karcher commanding the line of skirmishers in front.

Lieut. Ledergerber, Co. G, Lieut. Grenzenberg, Co. H, Lieut. Henne, Co. I, afterwards (on the 8th) severely wounded, Capt. Steinberg, Co. K. These officers and companies were assisting and relieving each other from time to time, acting as skirmishers in front of the column during the whole affair. First Lt. McKenzie, Co. D, covered our right flank; 1st Lieut. Andel, with Co. B and Co. C, our left, and 1st Lieut. Affleck, with Co. A, was marching behind as reserve, supporting and protecting the artillery.

Of the artillery (Flying Battery) I must give the highest compliments to Capt. Elbert, to Lieut. Schneider and Lieut. Gassen.

Of the cavalry, Col. Nemett has done his full duty, being sometimes one mile behind us charging in every direction, and protecting his own command as well as the infantry and artillery. I further mention Major Heinrichs, of Benton Hussars, who has commanded the companies of cavalry in advance, assisting and protecting the infantry in front and in both flanks.

Capt. Lebmman, who was always ready to charge, and always at work where there was some dangerous task to perform.

Lieut. Kiesmetter, who, in attacking the enemy with twelve men of the Benton Hussars up the hill in the bushes, was severely wounded, made a prisoner, and escaped from Bentonville, after the retreat of the enemy, although scarcely able to bring himself along. Lieut. Knispel, who acted as Adjutant to Col. Nemett, and brought reports to me under great personal danger. Capt. Jenks, of the 36th Illinois Cavalry (Col. Greusel's regiment) who was also with me in the advance, doing good service.

Of my staff, I mention 1st Lieut. Assmussen, Aid-De-Camp, and Lieut. Meysenberg, who executed all my orders with courage and promptness. Lieut. Schramm, commander of my escort of twenty men, who several times charged upon the enemy, or acted as skirmishers in advance, led by Sergeants Sprang, Mueller and Frantiocen, members of the escort. I also mention Lieut. Shepard,

Co. A, Benton Hussars, who was posted as picket near Osage Springs, and although surrounded, with his men, cut his way through the enemy and joined his command the other day.

ON THE 7TH AND 8TH.—Major Poten, commanding 17th Mo. Vols., who executed my orders to demonstrate against the enemy's line of retreat, with great discretion and skill, and came back at the right time the next morning to turn the enemy's right. Capt. Russel, of the 44th Ills., and twenty men of the 36th Ills. Cavalry, who, on the 7th, were posted on picket between Leesville and Major Poten's command on Sugar Creek, Bentonville road, made forty prisoners, the greatest part belonging to the Louisiana forces, and among them the principal officers of that command.

Major Heinrich's Benton Hussars, who assisted Major Poten on the 7th, as commander of the two companies of cavalry, and who on the 8th assisted me by bringing my orders to the cavalry, and other commands, during the whole time of the battle.

Capt. Von Kielmansegge, Act. Asst. Adjt. General, 1st Lieut. Assmussen, Lieut. Meysenberg and Lieut. Montzheimer, Aid-De-Camp, who, by their intelligence, superior education, and courage, assisted me to make our action systematic and perfect, and therefore efficient.

In conclusion, I direct your attention to the following non-commissioned officers and privates, who, by their faithful, prompt and brave conduct, have added much to the fortunate achievement on the 6th, 7th and 8th:

Corporal Saeger, and the following privates: Jacob Wacehter, Louis Berthold, Chas Beitner and Rudolph Hassler (all of the Benton Hussars) who, on the 6th, were standing picket the whole day near McKreisicks' farm, when the Divisions had left, to make the foraging parties, and other troops belonging to this command, aware of our movements and those of the enemy, which duties they performed to my best satisfaction.

The following non-commissioned officers and privates of Co. C, Benton Hussars, acting as my orderlies since Sept., 1861, deserve my thanks for their services done to me during that period and the three days of the battle: Sergeant Ruckam, Philip Heder, Joseph Eppinger, John Nagel, Bruno Krause and John Frey.

In making this report, I have restricted myself to mention only such officers, non-commissioned officers and privates, who were acting under my direct orders, whilst the reports of commanders of divisions, brigades, regiments and batteries, will show sufficiently what they have done, and what officers and men deserve praise and special consideration.

I am, General, your ob't serv't,

F. SIGEL,

Brig. Gen'l Comd'g 1st and 2d Divisions.

"To BRIG. GEN'L CURTIS, COMD'G ARMY OF THE S. W.

Copyright of *Annals of Iowa* is the property of State of Iowa, by & through the State Historical Society of Iowa and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.